

[Roxie Owens]

“ROXIE OWENS”

[md;]

Name: Rosie Hutchins Ashley

Address: Booneville, N. C.

Occupation: Widow

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“ROXIE OWENS”

[md;]

As I approach the house of Roxie Owens, I recall the time when it was necessary for me to go to the home in her time of despair. What a contrast today! The house, still unpainted, is surrounded with blooming flowers, the yard is clean, and rubbish removed, a line of freshly washed clothes drying in the sun, all show the gallant fight of a woman for her children and home. Several little girls are playing in the yard and one of them sees me as I walk up the path to the little cabin.

“Yoo-hoo, Miss Smith, come in, Mom will be right with ye”. said the child.

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"Howdy", said Roxie. "Patty Rose, go git Miss Smith a glass o' cool buttermilk. We jest been a-churnin' an' ther milk is good an' fresh. I guess I'll be makin' butter ther rest of my life fer my family is so big hit takes all ther cream I can git ter keep my chill'un in butter. Ole Bess is a good cow an' I don't know what we'ud done widout her, fer manys a time we'ud only have bread an' milk gravy fer our meals. Patty Rose here is one o' ther smaller ones. Yes'um, we have 15 chill'un but with all o' my troubles, ther Good Lord has blest me too.

"I went ter work in a hosiery mill in Winston when I was 14 years old. Me an' my sister, who was eleven then, went to work an' we made purty good money too. We got paid ever two weeks an' onct I 'member I was paid a \$10.00 gold piece, 3 ones an' some silver in change. I wanter ter keep hit so much for hit was so 2 purty but had to give hit up fer my board and keep. Sister is still workin' at ther same mill. She has been thar 31 years now.

"We used ter walk ter work, an' one day we passed a gang o' men workin' on some 'lectric lines. Thar was a real good lookin' boy in that gang , an' ever mornin' we passed them he would sorta smile like. I wished I could meet him , an' sho' nuff I did, fer one of ther girls who worked next ter me in ther mill knew him an' she inderduced us. I b'lieve John an' I fell in love all at onct , for we started goin' together reg'lar at ther fust.

"Pa's birthday was soon, an' we chill'un 'cided ter give him a party on a Sunday, so I 'vited John ter go along with Sister an' I ter home. That Sunday was ther happiest day, I shall never fergit hit. 13 months later we was married.

"John was a lineman an' made 'bout \$2.00 a day. That was good money then. We found us a little cottage an' funished hit with new furnishure. I worked 'till we got ther funishure paid for, an' then I quit for my baby was a-comin' along then. Little Julie was born 9 months attter we was married. John an' me was so happy in our little home an' with our new baby.

"One day when ther baby was a few months old, I heered a cyar stop out in front o' ther house. I got up an' went on ther porch. Thar was 2 strange men in ther cyar an' hit looked

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like somebody was a-layin' on ther back seat. One o' ther men got out an' opened ther back cyar door. I was so scared I couldn't speak. I saw them take John out o' ther cyar. I jest knew he was daid. They brought him in ther house an' helped git him in ther bed. Then the doctor came. He was thar doctor ther company sent atter John fell. Ther doctor 3 said he was hurt right bad but he'ud be all right soon. You see, he pulled a lig'ment in his back an' it bothered him up till ther time o' his death. Atter John got up we 'cided ter move ter ther country.

"John's mother had a big farm 'bout 30 miles from Winston. We helped her farm for 6 years. Vaneous, Paul, Ernest, an' Harvey was born at John's mothers. Vane had scarlet fever an' was mighty sick an' had Bright's disease for two years atter.

"We 'cided we needed a place o' our own as ther little ones was coming so fast, so John went in debt for this place. It has 40 acres. My husband cut an' sawed ther lumber fer ther house an' built hit only with enuff room ter do us at that time. We aimed ter add on ter ther house but it jest seem like we never could o' do hit 'count of sickness an' one thing o' 'nother. Clarence was born that spring. He was a good baby. John started our crop an' plowed up ther gyrden for I was goin' ter take care o' that. I planted some cabbeage an' wanted ter plant some onions too. I went over ter a neighbor's house an' she sold me some onion sets. She measured them out o' [?] an old bucket that was kinda green inside. I took them home an' started settin' them out. Ernest an' Harvey was playin' 'round me an' kept atter me fer some onions ter eat. I gave them some an' went on 'bout my plantin'. Purty soon, both ther boys was sick an' vomittin' sumpin awful an' nothin' I did would stop them. I sent Julie fer ther doctor an' in a short time he was ter ther house. 'Fore Dr. White got thar, I was most scared ter death for Harvey jest stiffened out an' I thought he was daid. Ther doctor had ter prise his mouth open ter give him some medecine an' he said he came jest in time or else Harvey would've died in 'bout 20 mo' minutes. You see, they was pisened by ther paris green lef' in ther 4 frum ther year 'fore. My neighbor was awfully

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upset over ther chill'un bein' sick but she said she didn't think about ther young 'uns eatin' ther onions.

"I guess you 'member ther flu epedimic. Back in 1918 I b'lieve. We was one o' ther fust families hereabouts ter have hit an' ever boddly was so afraid o' hit they would not come in ther house but would call outin ther yard an' put food on ther porch fer us. Virgil was borned that year an' I took ther flu when he was 3 days old. Ther two oldest chill'un didn't have hit but they was too small ter do anything. We all was awful sick but I managed ter git up an' did as much fer ther chill'un as I could. Hit's a wonder I didn't die an' I've been not strong ever since. John had hit worse'n ther rest o' us an' he wasn't able ter work any a-tall ther nex' summer.

"Dale was born nex' ter Virgil an' I was sick a long spell. Rheumatiz set in so bad I couldn't walk fer a long time. Soon's I was better o' hit, I had a nervous breakdown. Hit was fall agin 'fore I was [?] ter be up an' doin'.

"Hit wasn't long 'fore I knew I was big agin' an' Pearl was born ther nex' winter. 'Yore I quit nussin' her, Minnie Ruth came along an' I had ter have a doctor with me that a-time. I allers had a midwife but my health was bad, an' I didn't get along so well with her either.

"When Pearl was 2 or 3 years old we went ter see my brother. Brother Joe, lived on a farm like us an' he dug yarbs ter sell. Thar was allers a bunch o' 'em dryin' 'round ther place. He made good money those days sellin' yarbs but you can't make much sellin' them now-a-days.

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"The second day we was thar, 'bout dinner time, Pearl an' Dale came in an' said they was sick. They was a-vomittin' an' actin' jest like ther time Ernest an' Harvey got pizened. Both o' them was too sick ter tell me what they had been eatin'. John went atter ther doctor as fast as he could an' when he came he had ter work over them fer a long time. When they got better, so as ter talk, Pearl said they had chewed some o' Uncle Joe's 'baccar which

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was a-layin' out thar on ther table in ther yard. Brother Joe had dug up some poke root an' was a-dryin' hit ter sell. Thinkin' hit was 'baccer ther chill'un took a chaw o' hit. They got well in a few days tho' an' I was mighty happy ter see them runnin' an' playin' agin.

"When Billy was a wee baby, Julie was 'bout grown an' she took off one day an' got married. I hated ter see her leave me fer she was so much help, helpin' we with ther baby.

"Billy was two years old when Betty was born. Our house was so crowded with all ther babies comin' so fast. We jest couldn't git enuff money ahead ter pay off our debts an' build onto our house.

"Well, it seemed like somethin' was allers happenin' ter our family. Hit was jest one thing er nuther. Ernest was a big boy an' he kep' fussin' fer a gun, but, John, my husband, wouldn't let him have one an' then we didn't have no money ter buy one. But Ernest was so anxious for hit, that he got some parts frum old guns that other boys let him have an' made him one fer hisself. Hit would shoot real good, too, an' he kept us in rabbits an' squirrels. One mornin' jest 'fore Thanksgivin' he went off ter ther woods ter git rabbits. He wasn't gone so long 'fore he was back agin an' when he was comin' up ther path I noticed he was holden' himself like he was carryin' somethin' awful heavy. I couldn't unnerstand what hit was he had killed 6 that was makin' him walk like that but when he [?] got closter ter ther house I saw he was draggin' his foot an' his side was all covered with blood. I got ter [?] him as fast as I could an' put him ter bed. One o' ther chill'un ran ter my neighbor's an' got him ter go fer ther doctor in his cyar. Ernest was so weak 'cause he lost so much blood that when the doctor come, he put him in his cyar an' took him ter ther horspittal in Elkin. I went, too, an' stayed at ther horspittal while they took pitchers ter find whar ther bullit was. They could see hit in ther pitcher an' I saw hit, too. They said they had ter op'rate ter git hit out. The doctors cut in his side, but when they got inside, they couldn't find hit. Then they op'rated on his back, an' still they couldn't git hit, but hits thar yit 'cause I saw hit in ther pitcher.

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"We had a little money saved up then, but hit took all we had ter pay ther horspittal an' doctors, an' then thar wasn't enuff. We've never been able ter pay hit yit.

"Poe John got sick right atter that. He had high blood , an' a large heart an' kidney trouble. He couldn't work much but would tell ther boys what ter do. That was in ther winter o' 1932 an' 1933

"We had twelve chill'un ter home an' with so many mouths ter feed an' sickness an' all, we got in debt good an' plenty. We were afeered ter ast fer mo' credit an' we didn't have nary a cent ter run us either. Our wheat an' corn had give out an' o' course, that meant we couldn't have bread. Someboddy tole us 'bout ther Relief people in Yadkinville an' I went down thar an' ast fer some help till we could git on our feet agin. They was mighty fine ter us an' 7 we sure did 'preciate hit too, fer we didn't have nothin' a-tall. We couldn't even send ther chill'un ter school fer they didn't have clothes ter w'ar. That was a terrible winter an' then I was gittin' big agin. Era May was born ther nex' spring. My health was bad an' John was still unable ter work. How we got along ther Lord only knows.

"Vane was ther only one o' my boys that gave us any trouble. He got ter runnin' 'round with some o' ther boys that were tough an' didn't have a good name. Me an' John tried ter make him stay ter home but boys his'n age wouldn't listen ter thar Ma's an' Pa's word, they thought they knew more'n than anyone. So one night t is gang broke in a neighbor's house. Vane stood on ther outside an' watched. Ther whole bunch o' 'em got caught. We didn't have any money ter git him out o' jail, so he had ter go on thar roads. He had ter take his own medecine an' hit made a man out o' him. They let him off atter he stayed on ther roads 4 months, 'cause he was a good boy. He had got 6 months. He larn't his lesson 'cause thats ther only time he got in trouble.

"When he was old enuff they sent him ter a [?] Camp. He stayed thar 'til ther money run out an' then they give him a honorable discharge.

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"Patty Rose was born nex' an' than Versie, ther baby.

"It was when Patty Rose was born, you was our caseworker. You 'member givin' me that order fer bed clothes an' dishes. We didn't have enuff plates so we could all eat at onct. I'll never forgit what you an' ther relief did fer us.

"I was sick a long spell attter Patty Rose was born. John was good ter me. He was one o' ther best men anywheres. Ever mornin' 8 he went out and prayed 'fore he went ter work. We belonged ter ther Pentecostal Holiness Church. I still go thar ever chance I git.

"When Versie, ther baby, was 18 months old John was taken bad sick an' had ter go ter bed. Fourteen days later he died. He didn't have eny 'surance but burial 'surance an' hit wasn't enuff ter pay all ther 'spences. I owed them \$63.00 attter. I put John away nice an' bout bought ther purtiest flowers. He had been so good ter me an' ther young 'uns, I felt like I couldn't do enuff fer him. We had his funeral at ther church an' his friends were all thar. Ther choir sung lots of hymns an' ther preacher talked so nice like 'bout my John. Hit was a gran' funeral.

"People wanted me ter put ther little ones in a 'aylum but I couldn't give them up like I had ter give up John.

"John had 3 good fox hounds so I sold them for \$30.00 an' give ever penny ter ther unnertaker. I aimed ter pay ever cent I owed fer John's fun'ral an' I did. I don't owe ther unnertaker nothin' a-tall now.

"We had a good crop las' year. Ther best we ever had I b'lieve. I nearly got out o' debt. Attter payin' ther fert'lizer bill, I had \$496.00 left. If I have a good crop this year I can git out o' debt but I'm afeered ther crop ain't goin' ter be so good.

"Clarence was in ther [?] 11 months. He is ther best one o' my boys. Never took one thing that belonged ter anyone else. Onct, when he was in ther [?], his Lieutenant wrote to me

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ter sen' Clarence money fer his bus fare. I sent him a dollar but Clarence came home 'fore he got ther money. When he got back ter camp he sent ther \$1.00 back ter me.

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"Ernest married soon atter John died. He went ter Virginia an' got a job in a garage makin' \$25.00 a week. Vane an' his wife are livin' thar too , an' he works at ther same place wher Ernest does. He makes \$20.00 a week. He has one little baby an' I wished you'ud see her. She's real cute an' smart too. Las' week, Clarence went ter Virginia fer they had a job fer him too. He is comin' back home Sunday atter his oddimobile. He aint married yit but I guess he'll be soon as he makes enuff money ter keep a wife. John taught all ther boys how ter work on cyars. We had a old one here for a long time an' they was forever tinkerin' with hit.

"The older chill'un didn't git much larnin' when they was little, but I make ther younger ones go ever day 'less ther weather's too rough. I tells them eddicashun means a lot ter people now-a-days. I only went through ther 5th [?] grade an' John didn't go a-tall. When we was married he couldn't even write his name or count. I taught him all I could. He was real smart an' larned good.

"Yes'um, Paul an' Harvey are married but Paul ain't livin' with his wife. She's a sweet little thing but Paul is sort o' harum-scarum like an' can't seem ter settle down.

"Thar ain't but 9 chill'un ter home now [?] but when Dale comes thar'll be 10 o' us here. I git fifteen dollars a month fer ther little 'uns unner 16, thar's six o' 'em. Hit helps a lot fer hit keeps my grocery bill paid up mos' o' ther time an' sometimes I managed ter git a dress fer myself er fer one o' ther young 'uns.

"My health ain' any too good now. I've gall bladder trouble an' I'm havin' all my teeth pulled out. Jest have 3 left. I don't know when I'll be able ter git me some of those store teeth but

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10 ther doctor said my old teeth was jest like pizen ter me, an' I wud feel better when they was all out.

"I pray fer my chill'un ever night, specially my boys. Las' week I went ter church an' when I got home I prayed mos' all night. Atter I went ter sleep, I had a dream or a vision. I thought John was with me an' we were in an apple orchit pickin' up apples. The tree wus jest full o' big purty ones. All ther little chill'un was with us an' we all was so happy. I then thought ther end o' time had come an' John was gone away frum me but ther little chill'un was still with me. Then, I thought I was [?] 'lowed ter go in New Jerusalem an' I saw ther streets all paved with gold. I b'lieve hit was a vision 'stead o' a dream. Hits awful hard ter git along widout John. I dream 'bout him so much. Sometimes my dreams are so real. I wake up b'lievin' that John is still with me. We got along good an' we never got mad but sometimes John would wud pout.

"We've never been [?] ter add on ter er finish our house as John an' me planned. Hit needs a new roof an' paintin' too, but I don't know if I'll ever be able ter do all that needs ter be done. I try ter keep ther house clean an' ther yard neat. Maybe some day ther chill'un will help me fix hit up.

"Yes, we're in lots better shape than we was a few years ago, but I'm still lonesome fer John even with all my little 'uns 'round me. Maybe hit won't be so long 'fore John and me will be together agin."